The

THOREAU SOCIETY BULLETIN

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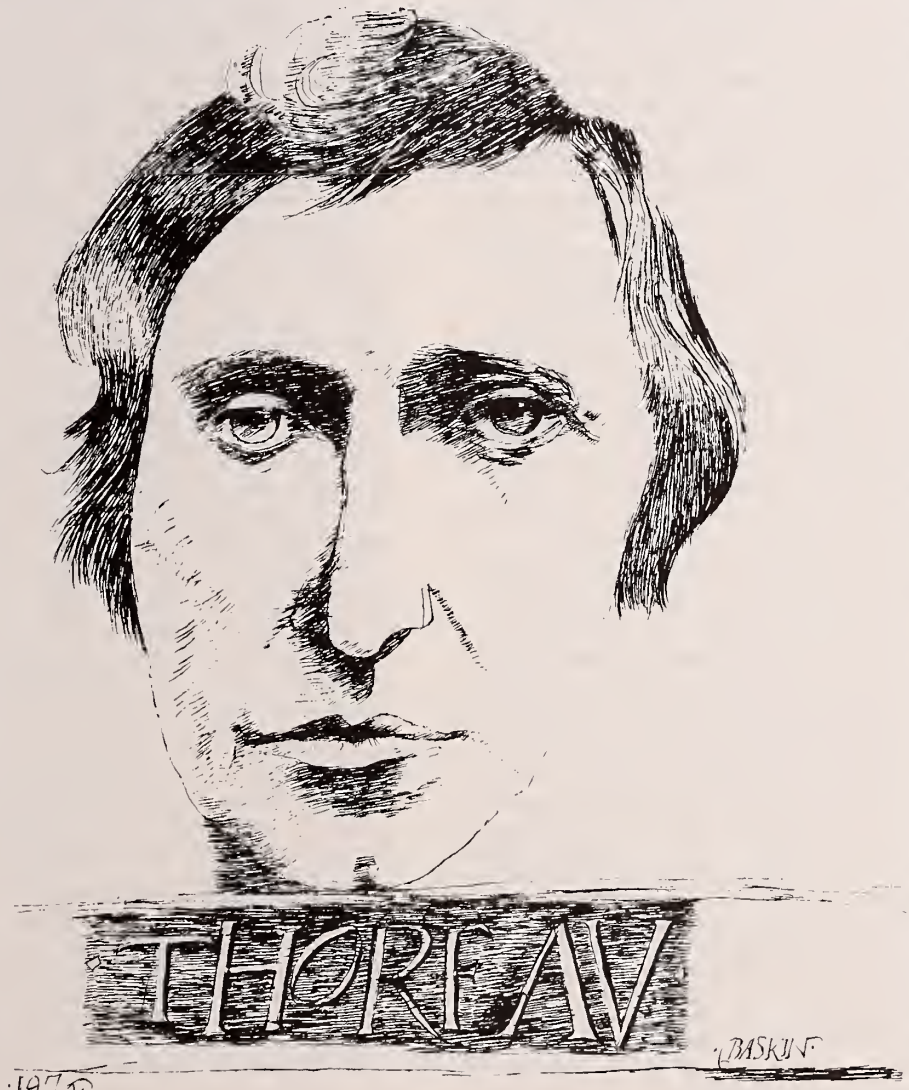
THOREAU, RICE AND VOSE ON THE COMMERCIAL SPIRIT by Morton Berkowitz

As part of the Commencement exercises at Harvard College on August 30, 1837 a Conference was held in which three members of the graduating class -- Charles Wyatt Rice, Henry Vose and David Henry Thoreau -- read brief essays on the topic, "The Commercial Spirit of Modern Times, Considered in its Influence on the Political, Moral, and Literary Character of the Nation."[1] Each conferee concentrated on a single aspect of the topic-- Rice politics, Vose literature, Thoreau morality-- which must have been an engaging one to a people about whom a foreign observor wrote: :(in America) nothing is greater or more brilliant than commerce; it attracts the attention of the public, and fills the imagination of the multitude."[2] In addition, it possessed a serious, lofty ring of the kind which would have recommended it to former students of Professor Edward Channing's lectures in Rhetoric.

But in the summer of 1837 the question of the commercial spirit was of much more than simply general or academic interest, for in that year America was plunged into the worst financial panic of its young history. The causes of the Panic of 1837 are numerous and complex, but have been attributed principally to the rampant speculation and over-extension of credit which accompanied America's rapid expansion westward. In May 1837 the storm broke with the closing of all New York banks, followed a few days later with bank closures in other U.S. cities. In New York alone the value of real estate depreciated over $40,000,000 in six months, with similar depreciations in other parts of the country. Riots occurred in the streets and widespread suffering and hardship ensued. In the absence of government welfare programs, cold and starving people had to depend on private charity for food and fuel. On May 15 President Van Buren issued the call for a special session of Congress to deal with the situation, its date of meeting fixed for September 4.[3]

It was then, against this background of economic distress that the audience of graduates and teachers, relatives and friends assembled in the main courtyard of Harvard College to hear three members of the Class of '37 confer on the Commercial Spirit.

The first of the three conferees was Charles Wyatt Rice. "The distinguishing trait of modern times," he begins, "is, the commercial spirit. The love of gain seems to have taken an universal hold of the hearts of men. Plutus is worshipped



Drawing of Thoreau by Leonard Baskin, from Richard Lebeaux's Young Man Thoreau, Courtesy of Univ. of Mass. Press.

with a zeal that consumes itself, and the flame at his altar is lit up with an intensity that brings the very temple crackling and crashing upon the head of the zealous votary, and buries him in its ruins."[4] From this beginning one might conclude that Rice was an enemy of commerce, especially as he later states: "Well do the members of all commercial states exclaim, the country is in bankruptcy ... And with this exclamation is uttered the confession that very much of this calamity has been brought about by the universal love of gain...."

Such, however, is not the case. Instead, Rice lays the blame for the contemporary "calamity" on "speculation," which he regards as a corruption of the true commercial spirit. "Were this questioned," he writes, "it might be read in the fate of the merchant who once the morn beheld constant at his counting room, content to get rich slowly but surely, until ... in a moment of temptation, he plunged into speculation and ruin." It might be read in the fate of the mechanic "who saved his hardearned wages ... only to sink them in speculation, and his family in distress." Indeed, the same baleful message might be read "in the conduct and fate of nearly every class of the community."

In making "speculation" into the villain of the piece, Rice embodies what at the time was an essentially Democratic, as opposed to Whig, position.[5] The latter tended to view the nation's financial chaos as the bitter fruit of former President Jackson's fiscal and monetary policy, his "hard money" policy and hostility towards the recently defunct Bank of the United States in particular. The supporters of Jacksonian policy, on the other hand, have been characterised as "furiously critical of banks, bankers, speculators, and monopolies of economic privilege" and firm believers in the view that the Panic of 1837 represented a "healthful deflation that would rid the country of speculators and gamblers."[6]

Rice's Democratic bias further manifests itself when he turns from the actual evils of the then present to the threatened evils of the future. With the imminent special session of Congress in mind, he declares: "Let us for a moment play the prophet, and reasoning from the nature of things, anticipate the effect of measures." He forsees two potential dangers emerging from this extra-ordinary Congress: "the evils of temporary legislation" and the (granting of) new powers to the government." The effect of the former, he believes, will be economic paralysis, "the business of the nation fettered by suspense." But it is the latter prospect which he finds most deeply alarming. In contrast to the Whigs' call for a stronger federal government, Rice affirms the Jacksonian conviction that the least government is best. "In times of deep distress," he writes, "it is thought that any state must be better than the present, any laws better than those now in force ... The depression of trade, too, is ever a strong motive in the people to grant new powers to government. They feel but too deeply that their trade is depressed, and they fancy that the remedy is ... in their legislators. They come with the humble prayer that the power may be taken from them ... Let them not be surprised (then), that the laws which appear to give relief to the many, give nothing but power to the few." (A week later President Van Buren repeated the same message to the opening session of the special Congress: "... the less government interferes with private pursuits the better for the general prosperity ... To avoid every unnecessary interference with the pursuits of the citizen will result in more benefit than to adopt measures which could only assist limited interests, and are eagerly ... sought for under the pressure of temporary circumstances.")[7]

In prescribing a remedy for the nation's ills. Rice once more identifies himself as a supporter of Jacksonian Democracy. Let the people, realize, he asserts, that the remedy is "in themselves," not "in their legislators." Let them awake "to the consciousness, that their best dependence is on themselves, and that power is safest where it is easiest recalled to those who delegated it." Rice's plea for political self-reliance was in harmony with the Democratic sentiment of the nation in general and Massachusetts in particular, whose leading Democratic journal, the Bay State Democrat, had only a short while earlier admonished its readers to "Trust to Yourself" and chanted the virtues of "self-dependence."[8]

Henry Vose presented the same audience with a different image of the commercial spirit. Because his main concern is, at least nominally, with the influence of commerce on the literature of the nation, he appears less overtly political than Rice. Simultaneously, however, there is in Vose's essay a strong political undertow whose steady drift is towards a Whig philosophy of government.

Vose begins: "It has been said to be one of the principal signs of the times that the commercial spirit is superseding the warlike spirit in Christiandom. If this be true it is indeed a triumph, and we may discover in it some of the causes of that superiority ... of modern times over past ages."[9] There is a certain aptness in Vose's early linking of commerce and Christiandom, the commercial spirit with, as it were, the Holy Spirit, since the remainder of his essay is in large measure a hymn to commerce. He approaches his subject with a proselytizing zeal, and conceives the spread of commerce in much the same language and imagery that nineteenth-century missionary societies conceived the spread of the Gospel. "That commerce in its innumerable relations influences almost every department of human affairs no one can doubt ... Its power is almost without limit. As long as there are lands to be explored or seas to be navigated, its votaries are imperceptibly carried farther and farther into its meshes. It deals with every nation and every class, and comes in contact with human character of every stamp." As commerce penetrates farther and farther into the unredeemed heart of darkness, it brings with it a heavy load of presents, something for everyone. "This growing commercial spirit is of a nature to unite the nations of the earth. It nurtures a community of interests among people of different tongues and climes." It brings people "nearer to each other, and advance(s) ... our nation in education and refinement." It "binds together the different parts of the same country" and gives "impetus and nutriment to all the energies of mankind." It spreads "activity, enterprise and wealth through all classes of society," awakens "the moral and intellectual powers of a people," and stamps upon "their literary character its own indelible characteristics."

This depiction of the commercial spirit as omnibenevolent and of benefit to "all the classes of society" was a commonplace of Whig propaganda, adored by industrialists, large-scale manufacturers and dependent politicians alike. It arose largely in response to the Democratic argument that certain contemplated political and economic measures -- various forms of aid for business, such as tariff and currency legislation[10] -- would be, in President Van Buren's words, "to us the property of some for

the benefit of others."[11] In New England the Whig position was espoused most eloquently and emphatically by Massachusetts's own Daniel Webster. In November 1836, speaking in Boston before the Society for the Diffusion of Knowledge, Webster declared: "... this augmentation of wealth and comfort is general and diffusive, reaching to all classes, embracing all interests, and benefitting not a part of society, but the whole." The effect of commercial activity "has been not only to increase property, but to equalize it, to diffuse it, to scatter its advantages among the many, and to give content, cheerfulness, and animation to all classes of the social system."[12]

Vose's awareness that the commercial spirit was not without its detractors may be seen in a passage in which he berates those "whose vision is so limited that they only see the merchant through the medium of his day-book and ledger, and ... believe his whole life consists in buying and selling merchandise." Such narrowness of vision, he insists, is the result of forming one's judgment "from palpable and outward circumstances," and is the habit of those "who are either too indifferent or too thoughtless to carry their observation farther." To those who are neither too indifferent or too thoughtless, the truth appears far otherwise. Indeed, "If the public in modern times is indebted to any one class of men more than another for the aid they have given the sciences and arts, it is to our merchants."

Here, for the first time, Vose touches on the relationship between commerce and literature. "The novelist," he writes, anticipating works of fiction such as Dana's Two Years Before the Mast and Melville's Moby-Dick, "finds a romance on the sea and in traffic, matter-of-fact as it may seem, and seizes upon it with ... boldness and zeal...." Vose, however, discovers an even more immediate connection between commerce and literature. "But commerce exerts a more direct influence on literature. It is from the munificence of its devotees that the noblest institutions for the amelioration and education of mankind have grown up." Through their generosity, American merchants and businessmen have erected "lasting monuments to their memory," not the least of which, Vose reminds his audience, is "our Alma Mater."

It is clear from what has been said that in political and economic matters Vose is on the side of the Establishment. His political instincts are conservative and conform to the contemporary neo-Hamiltonian, Whig philosophy that what is good for business is good for the country. He sees the union of commerce and literature as a consummation devoutly to be wished, and discovers in the figure of the cultivated business man, the Merchant of Boston, a pattern of heroic virtue. "It is indeed desirable," he concludes, "that the pursuits of literature and commerce should have a common feeling and end ... And we know of no readier means by which this community of feeling may be effected than that the scholar and the merchant should often times change places."

Having chosen (or been assigned) that aspect of the general topic dealing with morality, Thoreau begins on a more philosophical chord than either of the other two conferees. His introductory sentence has as its subject nothing less than the "history of the world." "The history of the world," he writes, "... is the history of the progress of humanity; each epoch is characterised by some peculiar development; some element or principle is continuously being evolved by the simultaneous, though unconscious and involuntary, workings and struggles of the human mind."[13] This progressive and evolutionary view of history leads Thoreau to a consideration of the "peculiar development" of his own era. "Profound study and observation have discovered, that the characteristic of our epoch is perfect freedom -- freedom of thought and action." (p. 115) In turn, this "perfect freedom" "has generated an unusual degree of energy and activity -- it has generated the commercial spirit." (pp. 115-6)

As might have been expected by those who knew him, Thoreau has little good to say about the commercial spirit. It proceeds, he asserts, from a "blind, unmanly love of wealth," and wherever it exists "it is too sure to become a ruling spirit," diffusing into "all our thoughts and affections a degree of its own selfeshness...." (p. 116) No longer content with Nature, man "must needs ransack the bowels of the earth that he may make for himself a highway of iron over the surface." (p. 116) Indeed, it is here, in its opposition to Nature, that Thoreau discovers the most pernicious effects of the commercial spirit. In their "hammering and chipping, baking and brewing," men are distracted from the true purpose of their existence, a joyful contemplation and celebration of their life in Nature. How, he asks, would this "beehive of ours" appear to an observor "from an observatory among the stars"?

> Doubtless he would first be struck with the profuse beauty of our orb; he would never tire of admiring its varied zones and seasons, with their changes of livery ... (B)ut where he found one to admire with him his fair dwelling place, the ninety and nine would be scraping together a little of the gilded dust upon its surface ... This curious world which we inhabit is more wonderful than it is convenient, more beautiful then it is useful -- it is more to be admired and enjoyed then, than used. The order of things should be somewhat reversed, -- the seventh should be man's day of toil, wherein to earn his living by the sweat of his brow, and the other six his sabbath of the affections and the soul, in which to range this wide-spread garden, and drink in the soft influences and sublime revelations of Nature. (pp. 116, 117)

In short, the commercial spirit subverts man's deepest pleasures, upsets the proper "order of things" and makes of man, the lover and admirer of beauty, a money-grubber.

This being the case, Thoreau perceives the remedy as obvious. "Let men, true to their natures, cultivate the moral affections, lead manly and independent lives; let them make riches the means and not the end of existence, and we shall hear no more of the commercial spirit." (p. 117) Such a statement emphasises one of the dominant aspects of Thoreau's thought, an aspect which perhaps more than any other characterizes his peculiar variety of transcendentalism: idealism. For in exhorting men to be "true to their natures" and to lead "manly and independent lives," he implies that the "blind and unmanly love of wealth" to which he earlier referred, is somehow not an essential part of human nature. Such a sentiment, of course, can never be based on any conclusive evidence, but must always derive ultimately from a faith in mankind. In Thoreau's case, however, it receives at least theoretical support from the progressive, evolutionary view of history expressed at the beginning of his essay. If indeed the history of the world is the

history of the "progress of humanity," then even the commercial spirit, which Thoreau earlier designates as a sign of the times, cannot be all bad. Hence the essay's optimistic conclusion:

> The spirit we are considering is not altogether and without exception bad. We rejoice in it as one more indication of the entire and universal freedom which characterises the age in which we live -- as an indication that the human race is making one more advance in that infinite series of progressions which awaits it ... We glory in those very excesses which are a source of anxiety to the wise and good, as in evidence that man will not always be a slave of matter, but erelong, casting off those earth-born desires which identify him with the brute, shall pass the days of his sojourn in this his nether paradise as becomes the Lord of Creation. (pp. 117-8)

Before passing from Thoreau's essay to a brief summary of the three views we have been considering, let us ask whether, in the light of the Panic of 1837, his remarks do not constitute a flight from reality, a retreat into a sort of transcendental dope-dream. In this connection, one recalls Professor Schlesinger's criticism of the Transcendentalists: "... for the typical transcendentalist the flinching from politics perhaps expressed a failure they were trying to erect into a virtue. The exegencies of responsibility were exhausting: much better to demand perfection and indignantly reject the half loaf, than wear out body and spirit in vain grapplings with overmastering reality."[14]

In a world in which two-thirds of the population live close to or below the starvation level -- (historical adjustment to suit the year 1837 would not, I believe, make the figure much more sanguine) -- it is doubtless easier to believe that "man will not always be a slave to matter," than to work for the elimination of poverty. Yet it does not seem to me that the above criticism of the "typical transcendentalist" applies to Thoreau. For beside the many private acts of charity which he performed throughout his life, Thoreau's main pre-occupation was to make men think, on the assumption that true thought, that is, independent thought unconstrained by custom, tradition, fashion or prejudice, cannot help but enrich the life of the individual, whatever its affect may be on society. Moreover, in his own life he faced honestly and squarely the tensions implicit in any intellectual existence. Even Professor Schlesinger admits that, "Of all the New England group who renounced political choices, Thoreau alone lived at a degree of moral tension which imposed responsibilities equivalent to those borne by men who sought to govern."[15] In Thoreau's Commencement essay it is possible to discern the roots of part of this tension: the recognition of labor as a necessary part of human existence versus the awareness that man is made for more than labor alone; the recognition of earth as a source of raw materials whose refinement may with intelligent use benefit mankind versus the awareness that Nature also serves a supersensual function; finally, the recognition of man as a money-making animal versus the vision of man "passing the days of his sojourn in this his nether paradise as becomes the Lord of Creation."

In retrospect one is able to see that each of the three essays read aloud on that late summer day in 1837 was in one or another way representative of an important current of contemporary thought and sentiment. In his distrust of speculative enterprise, fear of increased federal government and ardent belief in political self-reliance, Rice serves as spokesman for the philosophy of Jacksonian Democracy. Vose, on the other hand, embodies the popular Whig attitude that what is good for business is good for the nation. For this reason he idealizes the businessman and favors the close union of commerce and literature, the latter's function being partly to glorify the former. Finally, Thoreau's criticism of materialism, together with his idealistic view of both man and Nature, represents several of the dominant attitudes associated with Transcendentalism. It is on account of the representative nature of these three viewpoints that the Conference which we have been considering from a small but lively part in the history not only of the individuals involved, but of their nation as well.

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NOTES

1. A copy of the Commencement program is reprinted in Milton Meltzer and Walter Harding, A Thoreau Profile (Concord, Mass., 1962), p. 34. In the actual Commencement Thoreau's speech came in between the speeches of Rice and Vose, though for the purpose of the present essay it is treated as having come third.
2. Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, edited by Henry Steele Commager (London, 1946), p. 424.
3. The facts presented here are taken from Samuel Eliot Morison, The Oxford History of the American People (NY., 1965), pp. 455-56; Walter Jennings, A History of Economic Progress in the United States (London, 1925), pp. 368-72; Reginald C. McGrane, The Panic of 1837 (Chicago, 1924), pp. 43-67.
4. Charles Wyatt Rice, "The Commercial Spirit of modern times considered in its influence on the political character of a nation," MS, Harvard. On a cover page, in Rice's hand, the topical title is preceded by "A Conference" and followed by "Charles Wyatt Rice, Brookfield, David Henry Thoreau, Concord, Henry Vose, Dorchester." Also on the cover page, in Rice's hand, "Delivered at Cambridge, the 30th August, 1837." There are no page numbers.
5. "During the depression which followed the panic of 1837, Democrat and Whigs clashed sharply over questions of fiscal and monetary policy. The Democrats favored a reduction of government spending, a restricted federal government.... The Whigs, on the other hand, advocated increased government spending and ... reestablishment of the United States Bank...." Paul Studenski and Herman Kroos, Financial History of the United States (NY., 1952), p. 111.
6, Glyndon G. Van Deusen, The Jacksonian Era, 1828-1848 (NY., 1959), p. 119.
7. Martin Van Buren, "Special Session Message on National Economic Distress, September 4, 1837," in Martin Van Buren, ed. Irving J. Sloan (Dobbs Ferry, NY., 1969), p. 52.
8. Cited in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Age of Jackson (Boston, 1953), p. 382.
9. Henry Vose, "The Commercial Spirit of modern times considered in its influence on the Moral, Political and Literary character of a nation," MS, Harvard. On a cover page, in Vose's hand, the topical title is followed by "H Vose." There are no page numbers.

10. Van Deusen, The Jacksonian Era, p. 122
11. Van Buren, Martin Van Buren, ed. Sloan, p. 52.
12. Daniel Webster, "The Application of Capital to the Benefit of All," in Carter Goodrich, ed., The Government and the Economy (Indianapolis, 1967), pp. 391, 393.
13. Henry Thoreau, "The commercial spirit of modern times considered in its influence on the Political, Moral, and Literary character of a Nation," Early Essays and Miscellanies (Princeton, 1975), p. 115. Subsequent quotations from this essay are followed in the text with the page number in parentheses.
14. Schlesinger, The Age of Jackson, p. 382.
15. Schlesinger, The Age of Jackson, p. 386.

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These drawings are reproduced from Thoreau's Journal. If you wish to identify them, simply look up the journal entry for the date indicated in the numerals.

REPORT OF THE WALKING SOCIETY IN SEARCH OF THE CHESTNUT HOUSE by Mary R. Fenn

Thoreau mentioned the Chestnut House several times in his Journal*, and there is a charming photograph of one of the huge trees which gave the house its name, in Gleason's Thoreau Country. Since Thoreau usually referred to the house from the vantage of the river, we had looked for it by canoe along the river, but unsuccessfully. Of course the trees have long since succumbed to the chestnut blight. Then too, in Thoreau's day when open fields were common, he could see many things from afar which now the woods obscure.

Our search for the Chestnut House actually began in the old settlement called Salem Village (now Danvers). We had visited the cellarhole of the Rev. Samuel Parris home, excavated by our own "Pick and Shovel Historian", as he calls himself, Roland Robbins. It was in the Parris house that Tituba, the servant girl, told tales of witches and spells to Parris' nine year old daughter Elizabeth and her friends, and started the dreadful witch trials in Salem in 1692. The minister himself was convinced that there were witches, and Cotton Mather even wrote a book proving it.

After a time reaction set in and the people of Salem Village turned against their minister who fled to the "frontier", in this case the old town of Sudbury. Furthermore he lived in the Chestnut House built in 1669. That section of Sudbury had, by Thoreau's day, become Wayland.

To make a long story short, we did at last find the Chestnut House. It is privately owned on a little dirt road out of sight of the river but not far from it. It is a beautiful old place, painted red, nestled most picturesquely in a setting of tall trees. Remote and isolated today, it must have indeed been in the frontier when Mr. Parris lived there. One hopes that the peaceful setting helped calm what must have been the anguish of guilt and shame which drove him from his home and church in Salem Village.

*Thoreau's Journal for: November 7, 1851, September 14, 1854, January 31, 1855, February 3, 1855, February 24, 1855.

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Ardura, Ernesto. "El Transcendentalismo y la Expectativa del Amanecei. Americas, 29 (August, 1977), 36-41.

Bovenizer, David. "Rambling Remarks." BARNESVILLE (Ohio) ENTERPRISE. July 21, 1977. Reflections on Thoreau,

Brooks, Paul. "Tonic of Wildness: On Re-reading Thoreau's The Maine Woods." Country Journal, 4 (Sept. 1977), 66-71

Bullough, Vern. SEXUAL VARIANCE IN SOCIETY AND HISTORY. New York: Wiley, 1976. Comments on Thoreau, pp. 615-616.

Busch, Frederick. "Thoreau and Melville as Cellmates." Modern Fiction Studies, 23 (Summer, 1977), 238-242. "Bartleby" and "Civil Disobedience."

Cameron, Kenneth W. "Young Thoreau and the Classics: A Review." AMER. TRANS. QUART., 35 (1977). Factual data on Thoreau's reading in the classics during his schooldays, information on the curriculum at the Concord Academy, and facsimile reproduction of some of the classic texts he used there.

Caruthers, J. Wade. OCTAVIUS BROOKS FROTHINGHAM, GENTLE RADICAL. Univ. of Alabama Press, 1977. 279pp. $15. Since Frothingham was the only one of the Transcendentalists to write a book-length history of the movement (one incidentally which almost completely ignored Thoreau), we have long needed a good study of his place in the movement. Caruthers now does present us with most of the facts and demonstrates particularly his place in the post-Civil War Free Religious Association movement. But with all the factual errors it contains one wonders how much it can be trusted. James Freeman Clarke is referred to as John Freeman Clark; George Ripley as Riply; Ezra Stiles Gannett as Ezra Styles Gannett; Fanny Kemble as Fanny Kimble; Peter Parley as Peter Parle; Maxwell Geismer as Geisman; the New York Tribune as the New York Herald Tribune; Lenox, Mass. (more than 100 miles inland), as "by the sea"; Parker's famous sermon on "The Transient and the Permanent in Christianity" as "The Permanent and the Transitory in Christianity"; C.P. Cranch the painter as "the sculptor"; and the Harvard Bicentennial of 1836 as occurring in 1843, and so on. Such errors in a "scholarly" book (or any book, for that matter) are inexcusable.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. THE JOURNALS AND MISCELLANEOUS NOTEBOOKS OF. Vol. XIII (1852-1855). Edited by Ralph Orth & Alfred Ferguson. Cambridge: Harvard, 1977. 555pp. $35.00. As this edition of the journals and notebooks reaches the mid-1850's, we find more and more commentary on HDT, not all of it complimentary. The cooling of the friendship of the two men is obvious. But more revealing is the editors' annotation showing for the first time how often Emerson used his comments on Thoreau

as the bases of remarks in his later essays without revealing who they were about. Ellery Channing appears here with astonishing frequency as Emerson's companion on his walks, leading one to wonder if he had been censored out of the earlier edition of these journals. How many know, incidentally, the name of Ellery's dog that often accompanied the Concord philosophers (including Henry) on their woodland walks? It was "Professor"! (p. 177). Whom was W.E.C. needling with that name, I wonder? There are also many high words of praise for Bronson Alcott, and lots of little anecdotes of the vagaries of Concord life. The general reader should be warned that in order to find these tidbits, he must wade through pages of lists of lectures and financial dealings--but at least those lists may prove of value to the researcher.

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Green, Eugene. "Reading Local History: Shattuck's HISTORY, Emerson's DISCOURSE, and Thoreau's WALDEN," NEW ENG. QUART, 50 (June, 1977), 303-314. Primarily on Thoreau's attitude toward the writing of local history.

Hendrick, George. HENRY SALT: HUMANITARIAN REFORMER AND MAN OF LETTERS. Urbana: Univ. of IL., 1977. 228pp. All ardent Thoreauvians should be aware of Henry Salt's immense contributions to Thoreau's fame and scholarship in England at the turn of the century. Their best evaluation so far is to be found in this new biography of which the chapter "Man of Letters" is the highlight. It not only discusses virtually all of Salt's many articles and books on Thoreau but also documents Salt's part in bringing Thoreau to the attention of Gandhi.

Kazuo Itoh. "On Thoreau's 'Soul,'" ZEN CULTURE (Institute for Zen Studies, Hanazoho College, Kyoto), 84 (March, 1977), 55-62.

Kaiser, Mary L. "Conversing with the Sky: The Imagery of Celestial Bodies in Thoreau's Poetry," THOR. JOUR. QUART., 9 (July, 1977), 15-28.

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-----. WALDEN. With a foreword by Courtlandt Canby & an Introduction and Appreciation by Edward Hepburn. New York: Peebles Classic Library, 1977 (?) 330pp.

-----. WALDEN, OR LIFE IN THE WOODS AND THE ESSAY "ON THE DUTY OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE." New York: Milestone Editions, n.d. 318pp.

-----. "A Winter Walk" in Wayne Hanley, ed., NATURAL HISTORY IN AMERICA. New York: Quadrangle, 1977. pp. 176-191. With a long introductory comment by Thoreau Society member Hanley in an anthology of great American nature writing.

Warders, Donald F. "Excursion in Understanding." CEA CRITIC, 37 (1975), 20-24. Essay review of a number of Thoreau books.

Williams, Paul. "Editors and Mice." TJQ, 9 (July, 1977), 11. Poem.

Wilson, Ellen. MARGARET FULLER: BLUESTOCKING, ROMANTIC, REVOLUTIONARY. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1977. 186pp. Written for young adults, this biography of Thoreau's friend is smoothly written and highly readable. It makes no pretention to scholarliness but is nonetheless accurate in its presentation and gives a good brief sketch of her life from Cambridge to Rome with occasional references to Thoreau.

Yamasake, Tokihiko. THE THEORY OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE. Osaka, 1977. 183pp. A comprehensive report of the findings of Japan's leading specialist on "Civil Disobedience." Text in Japanese.

-----. "Thoreau's View of Nature and His Social Actions." BULL. OF JAP. THOREAU SOCIETY, 3 (Sept. 1976), 6-7.

We are indebted to the following for information sent in for this bulletin: W.Bottorf, M.Campbell, S. Davidson, J.Dawson, R.Epler, R.Fleck, R.Haynes, L. Harding. E.Johnson, D.Kamen-Kaye, K. Hasegawa, G. Kerfoot, G.Megathlin, C.Moseley, M.Ouiro-Lugo, R. Schaedle, E.Schofield, R.Thompson, J.Vickers and T. Yamasaki (We are particularly grateful to the latter for the long list of Japanese publications on Thoreau.)

Please keep the secretary informed of items he has missed and new items as they appear.

4-11-52

THOREAU'S NUTRITION by Daniel Wesolowski

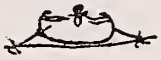
How nutritionally adequate was Thoreau's 'economical' Walden diet? The answer is quickly found by first constructing a hypothetical Thoreauvian dinner (a task made easy because Thoreau conscientiously records his diet's ingredients throughout Walden), finding the dinner's nutritional composition, and then comparing these results with the United States Department of Agriculture's daily dietary recommendations for a 28 year-old male.[1]

Walden's text informs us that, to a greater or lesser extent, Thoreau's diet from 1845-47 consists of brown rice, rye and Indian meal, beans, peas, unleavened bread, corn, turnips, sweet potatoes, purslane, apples (dried and fresh), melons, pumpkins, strawberries, blueberries, and occasional "mess of fish," molasses, and "hasty-pudding" (composed of cornmeal, salt, water, and molasses). The rice, beans, bread, fish, and"hasty-pudding" all supply protein, vitamins (vitamin A from the "hasty-pudding," vitamin B_1 (thiamin) and niacin from the rice and bread), and minerals (iron from the fish and molasses, potassium, calcium, and phosphorous from the other foods). The fruits and vegetables are rich in raw fibers, vitamins A and C (melons, strawberries, blueberries, corn, turnips, potatoes, and purslane), and digestive enzymes (apples in both forms).

If, and this is by no means improbable, Thoreau consumes 2 cups of rice (cooked) with 3/4 cups of beans (or peas) for a dinner's main course, and follows it with two or three cups of strawberries for 'dessert', he could expect the following nutrients: the rice supplies 10 grams of incomplete protein (and 6 grams of complete, usable protein), 136mg. of calcium, 1.6mg. of iron, 220mg. of phosphorous, 210mg. of potassium, .34mg. of B_1, and 4.7mg. of Niacin. The beans supply 11 grams of incomplete protein (and 4 grams of complete, usable protein), 140mg. of calcium, 1.6mg. of iron, 200mg. of phosphorous, 270mg. of potassium, .2mg. of B_1, and 1.4mg. of niacin. And the strawberries supply 6.2mg. of calcium, 3mg. of iron, 488mg. of potassium, 1.8mg. of niacin, and 176mg. of vitamin C. Additionally, the combination of rice and beans (or peas) complements their incomplete protein, and bolsters their complete, usable protein by a factor of 43% (thus giving Thoreau 15, instead of 10, grams of complete protein).

Thus, from this one 'economical' meal, Thoreau obtains the following percentages of his minimum daily requirements: Calcium--30%, Phosphorous--50%, Potassium--40%, Iron--85%, Vitamin B_1--60%, Niacin--50%, Vitamin C--400%, Protein--35%. Equally impressive statistics can be drrived from other combinations of his 'scanty fare', but these statistics would merely duplicate what already has been demonstrated: Namely that, although it might have reflected aesthetic and fiscal frugality, Thoreau's Walden diet did not imply nutritional frugality.

1. The statistics and information for this article are primarily taken from two books: Frances Moore Lappe, Diet for a Small Planet (New York, 1971), and John Kirschman (ed), Nutrition Almanac (New York, 1975). Because of its comprehensive notes (on diet and otherwise), the following Walden edition was employed: Henry David Thoreau, Walden and Civil Disobedience, The Variorum Editions, ed. Walter Harding (New York, 1962).



9-22-53

NOTES AND QUERIES. . .

Thoreau Society archivist Marcia Moss has recently discovered in the records of the Society of Middlesex Husbandmen & Manufacturers for October 6, 1847 notice of an award to John Thoreau of $2.00 for "splendid specimens of lead pencils."

Paramount Card Co. of Pawtucket, RI has recently issued note cards quoting Thoreau's "different drummer" and "The most I can do for my friend is simply to be a friend." American Greeting Cards has issued a graduation congratulation card featuring his "If you have built castles in the air..." April House has issued a poster featuring his "The language of friendship is not words but meaning." Cody's Bookstore of Berkeley, Calif, has issued another in their series of Thoreau calendars, this one for 1977 is entitled "The Season's Wine." The Perfection Form Co. of Logan, Iowa, issue illustrated note sheets featuring Thoreau's "In each dewdrop . . ."; a huge poster reproduction of the Dunshee ambrotype of Thoreau; and, of all things, a huge poster entitled "All American Literature Team" which includes Thoreau as "half-back for the defense"!

The May 1977 issue of BOATING tells of Lin Pardy sailing around the world in a 34' sailboat with Thoreau's WALDEN as her companion.

Herbert Carroll, in GENIUS IN THE MAKING (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1940), estimates Thoreau's IQ to have been 155.

The Conflict of Convictions, an anthology of American writers reporting on the Civil War (edited by Jack Lindeman; Philadelphia: Chilton, 1968) starts off surprisingly with Thoreau's May 3, 1861 letter to Blake and later adds his June 25, 1861 letter to Sanborn!

James Russell Lowell's Bigelow Papers, Second Series, in commenting about the village of Concord, says: "But Nowadays the Bridge ain't wut they show, So much ez Em'son, Hawthorne, an' Thoreau." Apparently either Lowell took poetic license or didn't know how to accent Thoreau's name!

A new anthology, 119 YEARS OF ATLANTIC, edited by Louise Desaulniers (Boston: Little Brown, 1977) includes Thoreau's "Chesuncook" essay, but like James Russell Lowell she deletes the famous "pine tree" sentence without comment.

Included in the Dr. Fred S. Piper Thoreau collection in the Cary Memorial Library in Lexington, Mass., are undated proof sheets (2) of an edition of WALDEN "Illustrated with Photographs of the Thoreau Country by Dr. Fred S. Piper" and "Privately Printed at the Prickly Burr Press, Lexington." Does anyone know if this edition was ever published?

NEWSWEEK for April 4, 1977, includes a photograph of HEW Secretary Joseph Califano in his office with a Thoreau quotation, "It is not enough to be busy. The question is what are we busy about?" on his wall.

Where does Thoreau say, "Ne quid quaeseveris extra Concordiamque"? It is quoted by Mrs. Swayne

in her STORY OF CONCORD, p. 178.

The syndicated cartoon "The Lockhorns" by Hoest for March 29, 1977 (BOSTON HERALD AMERICAN, &c.) cites one barfly to another, "Living a life of quiet desperation isn't as easy as it used to be." And the Jerry Dumas & Mort Walker syndicated cartoon strip (LINCOLN (neb.) JOURNAL & STAR) for June 12, 1977 shows its central character after many interruptions by others in his work deciding that is why Thoreau took to the woods.

The NEW YORKER for May 9, 1977, after citing Senator Muskie's recent complaint on the difficulties of living on a $65,500 salary, quotes Thoreau's Walden income.

The MINNEAPOLIS TRIBUNE for April 17, 1977, speaking of the late Carl Sandberg's love for books, quotes him as saying he needed a Thoreau book in every room of his house.

Where does Thoreau say, "What wealth it is to have such friends that we cannot think of them without elevation", asks Rick Thompson of Mt. Gretna, PA.

Prof. Steven Mailloux of Temple University, Philadelphia, who is editing HENRY DAVID THOREAU: A REFERENCE GUIDE for G.K.Hall, would appreciate learning of any 19th century references in print to Thoreau's works that are not listed in the standard bibliographies.

In answer to the winter bulletin query about Thoreau's reference to a Roman emperor's chamber of mirrors, Marilyn Roach and Miguel Quiros Lugo cite it was Domitian (A.D. 51-96).

In a letter of August 21, 1946, H.L. Mencken wrote a W.H. Archer, "Thoreau was an amusing fellow, and I agree with him in very large part. Nevertheless, I have never been able to convince myself that he was really profound. Unhappily, he has been horribly belabored by pinks of all sorts. I wish there were a really good edition of his writings." (Carl Bode, ed., The New Mencken Letters (New York: Dial, 1977), p.564.

Campers at Camp Beech Cliff of Mount Desert Island, Maine, plan to retrace Thoreau's Maine Woods journeys this summer.

Allan Holtzman (4406 Marble Hall rd, Apt. 306, Baltimore, MD 21218) is working on a bibliography of Thoreau's interest in Eastern religion and philosophy.

In United Airlines MAINLINER for July 1977, John Cage says, "Most of the ideas I've had, I have discovered as I read Thoreau. People may think of them as unconventional today, but they have been around for one hundred and fifty years. It was Thoreau who said, 'Music is continuous; only listening is intermittent.'" Incidentally, Cage's composition "Lecture on the Weather" includes readings from Thoreau plus projection of Thoreau's journal drawings on a screen.

Says Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., in a letter to Harold Laski on Nov. 21, 1931 (Holmes-Laski Letters, II, 1340), "I believe I have told you I can't see why they seem to take the author of Walden (I forget the name) so seriously."

WALDEN is a required textbook in a Lehigh University course on "Self-Reliance in a Technological Society" which includes rebuilding a wrecked house as part of its work.

The prospering Thoreau Society of Japan has recently issued its BULLETIN #3.

Mrs. Robert Moore of Concord has recently issued a charming little leaflet on Cuttyhunk Island featuring Thoreau's journal account of his visit there on June 27, 1856.

Joel Myerson calls our attention to a new Thoreau anecdote recorded in Maud Appleton McDowell;s THE JOY OF MEMORIES (Dorset, VT, 1937): "I have often heard my old uncle, who lived to be ninety-three, tell of how he, as a boy, often went to Thoreau's cove at Walden Pond, and once ventured to the door of the Hermit's cabin and asked for a drink of water, to which Thoreau replied: 'My son, I drink the waters of the pond. If it is good enough for me, it is good enough for you.'" And she follows this with "I was interested lately when a visiting clergyman . . . used the following quotation from Hawthorne's diary: 'Today, I had hoped to spend the entire day in meditation, but Thoreau came and the day was spoiled.'" Is there any evidence for this latter story?

Mary Gail Penn writes, "at the 1977 annual meeting someone asked if anyone knew why a certain locality on Cape Cod was called Mount Thoreau. The following in A Pilgrim Returns to Cape Cod by Edward Rowe Snow (1946) I think answers his question. Snow had visited the Wellfleet Oysterman House and then went in search of the cemetery.

"Uncle Jack Newcomb and his wife, Thankful, both died in 1856, and are interred in the Wellfleet graveyard. I hiked over the hill and found their graves after quite a hunt. The Wellfleet Oysterman's marble tombstone has a jagged crack. From the cemetery I struck across the fields for Robert Powdrell's home. He and his mother are the present owners of the Newcomb property. A short time later we went back to Mt. Thoreau, and Robert Powdrell allowed me to inspect the chimney.

'The original bricks are still there,' said Powdrell, ' but we have taken out the oven. The building was unoccupied for some time, and we purchased it from the Baker estate. Probably the Bakers got it from the Newcombs, for we bought it in 1919.'

'Have you ever stayed in it the year round?'

'Yes, for two years, but we haven't tried it lately. You may be interested to know that the room with the wooden shutters, which rattled in the wind the night Thoreau slept there, is just as it was originally. We try to keep it looking much the same as it was in the days when he visited here."

A CONFERENCE ON
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